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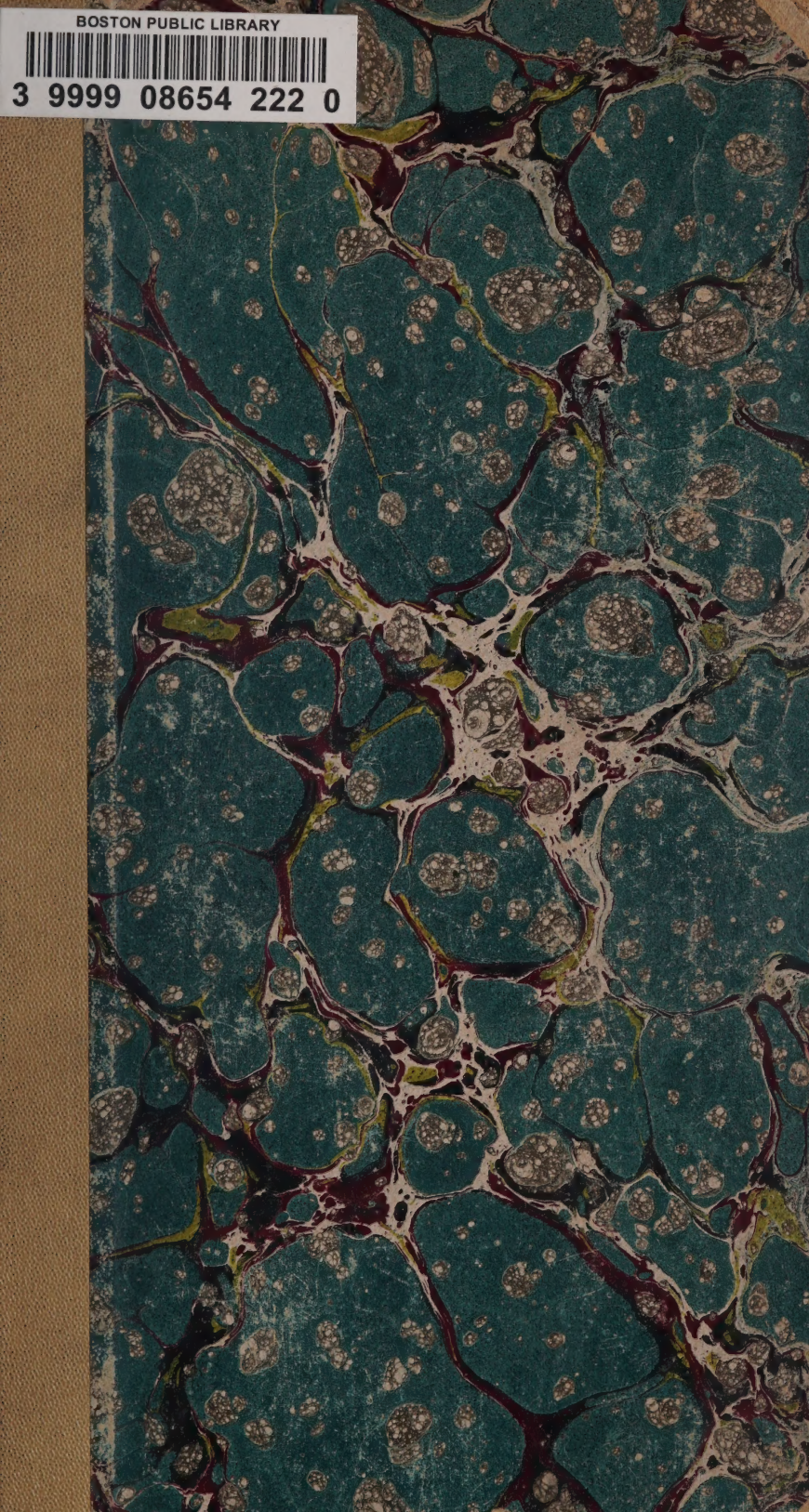

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1831

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Jona. French, Esq.

REPORT OF A COMMITTEE

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION OF INTEMPERANCE.

ADOPTED AT A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY,

7588.220
1831

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INTRODUCTION.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, held at the hall of the House of Representatives on the evening of Friday, the twenty-seventh day of May, 1831, Dr. JOHN C. WARREN, president of the Society, in the chair, a full and free discussion of the objects of the Society, and of the effects produced, was had. (A notice of this meeting was published in the Boston Courier on the third day of June.) The meeting was terminated by the choosing of a committee of thirteen, whose names will be found at the close of the following Report, and whose duty was prescribed in the following terms: "That a committee of thirteen persons be appointed to consider and report on the most expedient measures for raising the necessary funds for employing an agent of this Society to carry into effect the designs of the Society in suppressing intemperance."

At a meeting of the Society, on the evening of Friday, the third day of June, at the same place, the committee before mentioned presented the following Report. It was read, adopted, and ordered to be published and distributed, under the direction of a committee.

REPORT.

This Society was formed eighteen years ago. Its founders were generally regarded as philanthropists, who meant well, but who could effect nothing. It was then said, "What can be more hopeless than to expel from society *practices* which a vast majority consider to be not only innocent, but necessary to the reasonable enjoyment of life? If there be instances of excess, they are incident to the use of what was intended for use, and are to be regretted and pitied, as other excesses are. Even suppose these philanthropists to be right in their theories, how can they carry them into effect, since they can have little aid from any *penal* law? They can only address themselves to reason; and this they must do in opposition to practice, habit and fashion, confirmed through many generations, and already sanctioned by public opinion."

But they were not discouraged. They persevered. They spoke to the understanding. They were heard and respected. And what are the fruits of their labors? A new era has opened to the social and reasonable world. *It has come home to the common sense of the community, that ardent spirits are not necessary to the pleasures of life; that the use of them is the prolific parent of waste, of bodily infirmity, of intellectual debasement, of moral depravity.* It is perceived that intoxicating drink is that fiend who makes the parent odious in the sight of the child, and the hopeful son to become "the heaviness of his mother;" that it converts the husband into an object of sorrow to her who was promised that she should live in the light of his countenance, and be cherished by his affectionate care.

It is now proved and acknowledged, that it is ardent spirit which moves the massive bolt, and turns the grating hinge of the prison; that peoples the bar of justice, and the places of condemnation, of seclusion and of wo; that passes, like a consuming fire, through the abodes of cheerful peace and thankful industry.

Such are the truths which have been taught. They have been honored as truths. Throughout this Commonwealth, in the places of laborious industry, on the high seas, in the retirement of domestic life, ardent spirit is by many now abhorred as the fraudulent and cruel enemy of the human race.

Yet all is not done that can be done. There is a class in large cities, and populous towns, who are not touched by what is *now* common sense and plain reason. They have yet to learn that their habitual practice is against a law of nature prescribed for their good. It is for *these* that the diligent efforts of this Society are demanded. *Their error is founded in ignorance.* They began by imitation. They have gone on to habit. Truth cannot penetrate the darkness which envelopes them. Moral and occasional teaching is far distant from them. Addresses, essays, discussions, tracts, are to them wholly unknown. They must be *spoken* to in the gentleness of persuasion; and this again and again. There is a last stroke, which breaks even the close-grained granite. Like this they are hardened; and like this they must be wrought upon; not only for themselves, but for wives, for children, for members of society, who are born, and who pass their childhood, in the homes of half stupid, half savage, consumers of intoxicating drink. "*But,*" it is said, "*why are they, who suffer nothing from this depravity, to busy themselves in the work of reformation? What is all this to them?*" Let us, in turn, ask some questions.

Is there a created system of being around us? Did it proceed from Supreme Intelligence, or is it of man's making? If from such Intelligence, is man a prominent part of it? Is he a free agent, and capable of choosing what is good or evil according to the law of his being? Is he capable of improving and growing wiser? Is it not historically true, that improvement is gradual, and extends through many generations? Is it, or not, true, that general improvement springs from individual exertion? Is not each generation debtor to preceding ones for the light that has descended? Is not that debt to be paid to the generations which are to follow? Are not some men, in every existing generation, blessed with intelligence, and with means of benevolence, and others ignorant, and without the means of knowing that their condition can be made better? Are there no duties enjoined upon the former to the latter? Is it not awfully true in *moral*, as it is proverbially true in political law, that he who can, and does not, prevent crime, is *guilty* of it?*

To such, and many like questions which arise, there can be but one answer from rational and benevolent minds. To these only do we speak; and of them we ask, *Is there any Christian or humane duty so imperative as that of teaching the unfortunate ignorant what are the inevitable consequences of the habitual use of ardent spirits?*

* 1. Qui non prohibet, quod prohibere potest, *consentire* videtur. *He who does not prohibit, when he can, seems to* CONSENT.

2. Qui non obstat, cum possit, *facere*, videtur. *He who does not prevent, when he can,* APPROVES *what is done.*

3. Qui non vetat, cum debeat, et possit, *jubet*. *He who does not hinder, when he ought, and can,* COMMANDS *to do.*

We do not say, as to those on whom habit has so fastened itself as to become a part of its victims, that they can be reclaimed; though even of these there is hope. But between such cases and those where the course of ruin and wretchedness is just begun upon, there is abundant space for benevolent exertion. It is rather to *prevention* that our thoughts are turned. Time will soon dispose of the incurable. It is to those who are in danger, and assailed by evil example, and hourly temptation, that we are to teach the truth, that comfort, duty, health, independence, and that first of earthly blessings, *peace of mind* will be found in *abstinence*.

What are the means to these ends?——

First. Example. This is a powerful dissuasive; but this is to be rationally used, and not so used as, by unreasonable rigidness, to defeat its own object.

Secondly. That each person who employs others should regard it as an imperative and Christian duty to enlighten them as to the consequences of habitual use of spirits, and to show to them, on the one hand, the saving of money, the promotion of strength and health, the certainty of tranquillity, and comfort, and independence; and, on the other, the feverish excitement, the continual drain upon their earnings, the restlessness and inquietude of their homes, the stealing on of habits, the loss of self-regard, the gradual but sure decline into wretchedness and crime; and in all cases, (all other things being equal,) rather to prefer to employ those who manifest a sensibility to these solemn truths, than those who cannot, or will not, understand them.

Thirdly. To appeal to the good sense and humanity of our fellow citizens whose business in life it is to sell ardent spirits, among other articles, and especially to those of them *who set apart a place in their shops for the sole purpose of drinking.* Certainly these citizens, who are among the most respectable and worthy in our community, do not realize that the returns which they make for the little sums which they gather from the dissolute young, and the laboring poor, mournfully aid to destroy parental hopes; to visit innocent women and children with poverty, tears and griefs; gradually prepare the way for loss of character, health and usefulness; and help to consign many to an untimely grave, and, perhaps, through the common highway of crime. Certainly these citizens are not mindful that there is to be a day of just and righteous judgment, when *wealth*, either as to the mode of gathering it or the uses made of it, will count nothing for its owners unless it rise up as sweet memorials, in the discharge of duties which man owes to man, in his social union, while on earth.

Fourthly. To disseminate truth among the friendless and the ignorant, and to console and to comfort them, and to draw them gently from the ruin that may come. This can be done only by personal

agency; by skillful and reasonable persuasion. This requires agents and money. The former may be found; *can the latter be?*

In this great city there are abundant means, if the necessity of using them were known, and the willingness to use them were felt. What a small per centage of what is annually expended for no useful purpose would fully supply all that is wanted for this important charity! It is said by some, that they want all their means for necessary purposes, and that these are innocent, pleasant, just, and dutiful. Is there any expenditure which one has a right to make, and which he can make with more advantage to himself than for purposes which raise him in his own esteem, and which he can look back upon with heart-felt pleasure? Did any one ever feel the want of that which he gave in commendable charity? There is a day coming to every son of man, in which he must take leave, forever, of all that he has gathered. *Then*, the nothingness of earthly treasure will press upon him; the uses which he has made of it will press still harder. What is it to him, *then*, whether his heirs shall have a little more or less? Will it be something to him, *then*, that he need not shrink from the account of his stewardship, if he believes that it will be called for? But if there be minds which are not awake to such considerations, there are few who do not ask themselves the question, "What will be said and thought of me and mine, when I am gathered to the dust?" Is it not true, that giving to promote the great duties which bind us together in social life, is among the most grateful pleasures of life? Is not this a pleasure which is as pure, and as unmixed with the dross of the world, as any which can be known, in our passage through it? Is there any one for which a man can like himself better, when he comes to look back on it, and on all things? It is not only generous gifts from a few, that this object demands, but little gifts from many. It is certainly true, that there is no community, of equal population and wealth, in the Christian world, in which so much is given, as in Boston, for honorable and charitable purposes. There is no community in which the duty of charity is more sincerely felt, and acted upon, as a *principle*, than in this. But it is believed, that the beneficial effect of charity, *on the present subject*, has not been brought to notice as it is to be hoped it will be. It cannot be doubted that there may be added to the honorable fame of this city the reputation of being *foremost* in this cause of humanity.

If we appeal in vain to our own sex, let us address ourselves to that which is never insensible to the calls of kindness, duty and benevolence. Be it forever remembered in honor of this sex, that this is their recorded eulogy by a far-travelled American;—"I never addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship to a woman whether civilized or savage, without receiving a decent and friendly

answer. *With man it has often been otherwise.* In wandering over the barren plains of inhospitable Denmark, through honest Sweden, frozen Lapland, rude and churlish Finland, unprincipled Russia, and the wide-spread regions of the wandering Tartar, if hungry, dry, cold, wet, or sick, WOMAN has ever been friendly to me, and uniformly so; and, to add to this virtue, (so worthy of the name of benevolence,) these actions have been performed in so free and so kind a manner, that if I was dry, I drank the sweet draught, and if hungry, ate the coarse morsel, with a double relish."

You who are wives and mothers; you who dwell with lordly man, and make him find his highest happiness in securing your respect and affection; and you (if there be any) who know what it is to want that indescribable support, in the cares and anxieties of domestic life, which springs from the tender sympathies of an affectionate husband,—permit us to ask you to look in upon a family where the male head of it breaks into it in a state of intoxication. See how the mother and the wife strives to hide from the inquiring eye of childhood the causes of this distressing degradation. Let us go one step farther, in the scale of depravity, and see this exhausted female sinking, at last, under her accumulated calamities and griefs, and seeking, as her only refuge, the like intoxicating draught. Yet there is one step. These children are taken from their now worthless parents, and necessarily exiled among strangers, in the unnatural state of orphans, while their parents live!

Daughters of humanity and kindness! Founders of all tender and delicate refinement of the other sex! You have been raised from the odious degradation which pagan and Mahometan religion assigns to you, to that which Christianity meant for you. You who are, by this divine law, wives and mothers, we call on you to compassionate those who might be what you are, if they were freed from that destroyer of human welfare, *ardent spirit.* Would not some of the sacrifices which you make to fashion and to custom be better spent in extirpating misery, and in improving the society which you adorn? Cannot you do something to crush the seeds of this misery in the moment in which they are sinking into the fertile ground? When you feel that sentiment for your beautiful and innocent offspring, which has been given to you as the reward of your fidelity and care, and denied to the other sex, are you sensible how many there are who might feel what you so dearly cherish, if you would raise your voices in this cause of benevolence and improvement?

You cannot know that the city in which you rule and reign in the departments of rational happiness, is that part of the State in which the least advance has been made in shedding light, and in aiding the wretched to escape from their chains.

The number of houses in Boston licensed to sell ardent spirits is about seven hundred. On a low estimate, it may be stated, that not less than ten male persons visit each of these places in a day. This being the fact, the whole number of men visiting licensed drinking houses, *every day, in this city*, will amount to about SEVEN THOUSAND! —What an enormous mass of corruption must be generated in these places!—But this view does not comprise the whole of the evil. There are a great number of unlicensed houses. There is a vast deal of private drinking among men, women and *children*. How much poverty, cruelty, savage violence, disease, and how many deaths, arise from this prolific monster! How many wives are overpowered with brutality! how many widows and orphans created by untimely death! how many of our public and private charities are required by the consequences of this fruitful mischief! And a large part of these evils arise from a *positive ignorance*, which might be dissipated by the labors of the benevolent.

It is not for this day, and to-morrow, that you are invited to engage, but, by gradual and persevering effort, to stamp your own image on the age in which you live, and help to raise man to the dignity which his Creator meant for him. If we fail in our appeal to you, certainly this cause is hopeless.

The committee respectfully submit to the consideration of this Society the following Resolves:—

1. *Resolved*, in the opinion of the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, that, if the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars were annually expended in supporting judicious and intelligent agents, commissioned to visit the abodes of the friendless who are liable to the temptations of intemperance, and the abodes of many who have already fallen into such habits, the most gratifying results in the cause of humanity may be expected therefrom.

2. *Resolved*, that the citizens of Boston be, and they are hereby respectfully invited TO MEET AT THE COURT HOUSE, COURT SQUARE, ON THE TWENTIETH DAY OF JUNE NEXT, AT FOUR O'CLOCK, P. M., to take into consideration whether any and what means should be taken to raise funds for the purposes in the first aforegoing resolve set forth.

3. *Resolved*, that the said citizens be, and they are hereby, requested to consider, whether any and what means should be adopted to diminish the number of places in Boston in which ardent spirits are retailed.

4. *Resolved*, that the said citizens be, and they are hereby, requested to consider, whether any and what alterations should be sought for, either in the existing laws, or in the city charter, with a view to suppress the causes of intemperance.

JOHN C. WARREN,
WILLIAM SULLIVAN,
AMOS LAWRENCE,
WILLIAM SIMMONS,
JOHN G. PALFREY,
HOSEA HILDRETH,
GEORGE C. SHATTUCK,
STEPHEN FAIRBANKS,
MOSES GRANT,
HARRISON GRAY,
BENJAMIN SEAVER,
JOSHUA B. FLINT,
JOHN P. SPOONER.

Boston, June 3, 1831.

APPENDIX.

Facts and Statements in Support of the foregoing Report.

There were *six hundred and ninety licenses* granted by the Mayor and Aldermen, in the city of Boston, in the year 1830, from 1st January to 31st December, viz.

Innholders,.....	70
Victuallers,.....	594
Retailers,.....	22
Confectioners,.....	4
	690

Confectioners are not permitted by law to carry on their trade without first having obtained a license [illegible] after granting such license, and no confectioner shall presume to sell any spirituous liquors, or any mixed liquors, part of which is spirituous, or suffer any person to be drinking such in his house, or place of business. The evils, therefore, complained of in the Report, are not to be attributed to the confectioners, unless they violate their licenses.

No person is at liberty to sell in less quantity than twenty-eight gallons; and by a law passed 19th March last, to take effect the last Tuesday of June current, in less quantity than ten gallons, without first having obtained a license. Retailers are licensed to sell in less than the aforesaid quantity, and prohibited from suffering any part thereof to be drunk in their houses, stores, shops, or in any of the dependencies thereof. Unless they violate their licenses, no tippling can take place on their premises.

The two first classes of licensed persons, named in the foregoing list, viz. innholders and victuallers, are, by the general laws of the commonwealth, one and the same. They are commonly denominated *tavern-keepers*, and in the general law, in relation to licensed houses, are called *common victuallers, innholders*, or *taverners*. They are bound, under heavy penalties, to be furnished, at all times, with suitable provisions and lodgings, for the entertainment and refreshment of strangers and travellers, and stable-room, hay and provender for their horses. They are forbidden to sell liquors to any minor, servant, tippler, common drunkard, or gambler; or to suffer them to remain in their houses. They are prohibited from suffering any gambling, or having any of the implements of gambling, in their houses or dependencies.

On the 14th of December, 1816, a special act, for the city (then town) of Boston alone, was passed by the legislature of the State—an act more injurious to Boston than any other act ever passed on the

same subject. Under this act, the 594 persons, named in the foregoing list, are licensed. These licenses constitute the tippling shops, to be found in every street in the city. By the provisions of the act, they are not required to furnish accommodations for horses, or lodging for travellers or other persons. They have all the privileges of innholders, as to the sale of spirits and other liquors, except the privilege of selling on the Lord's day, or after 10 o'clock on the evenings of other days. A room twelve feet square is sufficient for the erection of a counter, the display of decanters, and the sale of intoxicating liquors. Before the passing of this act, no persons but innholders had the right to sell a glass of liquor to be drunk in their houses or the dependencies thereof. Under the old law, tippling shops could never have increased to the alarming number which now exists.

The two first classes of licensed places amount to 664. If we suppose only ten persons, which is probably far short of the number, to visit each of these places daily, it will give *six thousand six hundred and forty persons*, who are in the habit of using ardent spirits *daily*. If we suppose each glass of liquor to cost six cents, it will amount to $398 : 40 per day, and to $145,416 per year. A great portion of this sum is the earnings of day-laborers, many of whom have wives and children at home, suffering for bread and the other necessaries of life. The husband has consumed the earnings of the day in the orgies of a tippling shop, and returns, late in the evening, to his family, an object of terror and disgust.

If we trace the effects of intemperance farther, we shall find the history and fate of its victims in the records of our criminal courts, our jail, house of correction, house for juvenile offenders, and almshouse. It may be said, without fear of contradiction, that three fourths of the inmates of these establishments are in the habitual use of intoxicating liquors. Those who are convicted as common drunkards constitute but a portion of the violators of the law, whose offences are attributable to the excitement of ardent spirits. The Rev. Dr. Tuckerman, in his letter of last year to the Mayor, states, that he ascertained, from the records of the house of correction, the number of commitments between the 6th of June, 1823, and the 31st of July, 1829.

There were committed by the Police Court, alone, . . .		3034
Of this number, there were common drunkards, . .	1484	
wanton and lascivious, .	849	
vagabonds, ...	240	
	2573	
The remainder were committed for various offences,	461	
		3034

Although only one of the three classes above enumerated includes, of record, common drunkards, there is no doubt, from the information of officers of the Police Court, that most of the individuals of the other two classes were in the constant habit of using ardent spirits to intoxication.

No one, who has made himself acquainted with existing facts, can doubt, that intemperance is the most productive cause of pauperism and moral degradation, which infests this community. Most of its victims are, sooner or later, thrown on the public for support. They be-

come the voluntary tenants of an alms-house, or drag out a miserable existence, under sentence of the law, in a jail or house of correction. The magnitude of the evil should be understood and felt by every class of citizens, and by every individual in this community. All have a common interest in expelling this pestilence from our city, or, if that be impracticable, in putting such check to its ravages, as the individual and collective exertions of our citizens may be able to effect.

The efforts which have been made, and are now making, to check and diminish the use of ardent spirit in the city, are worthy of all praise. Many of our most respectable and worthy mechanics, who have large numbers of men in their employment, have determined to try the experiment, whether work may not be done as well, and as great an amount of labor obtained, without rum, as with it. We have heard of individual instances of such determinations being formed and carried into effect, with an energy and independence of character honorable to that class of our citizens. An association of such citizens, as employ and direct large numbers of laborers, might be beneficially formed. Their united efforts would soon put an end to the use of ardent spirits in the erection of houses, stores and other buildings.

No person in this community is so high, as to be beyond the reach of the evils and sufferings of intemperance. Neither wealth, talents nor learning will protect him. The most exemplary citizen may be called to mourn over a brother or a son, who has fallen a victim to this destroyer. It is not the guilty alone, who suffer the penalties of intemperance. It wounds us through the ties of social and domestic life. With the poor, the common laborer, there is but one step, from the habitual use of intoxicating liquors, to a jail, house of correction, or alms-house. The intemperance of parents is uniformly found to result in the neglect of their children. Such children become vagrants in our streets, are exposed to the most corrupting influences, and contract habits inconsistent with public morals and the good order of the community. The house for juvenile offenders owes it origin, in no small degree, to the necessity of rescuing such children from the baneful influences of intemperate parents. It is no uncommon occurrence, that the intemperance of the head of a family throws all its members on the public for support, in the form of paupers or criminals.

How are these evils to be remedied? By a united and energetic effort of the people.